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A Letter ... to John Farr and John Harris ... on the Affairs of America.

By

Edmund Burke

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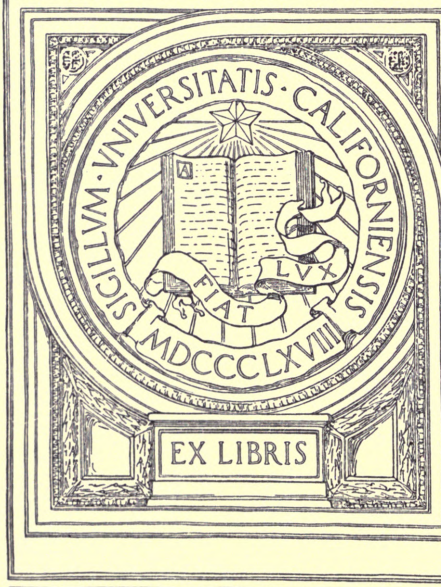

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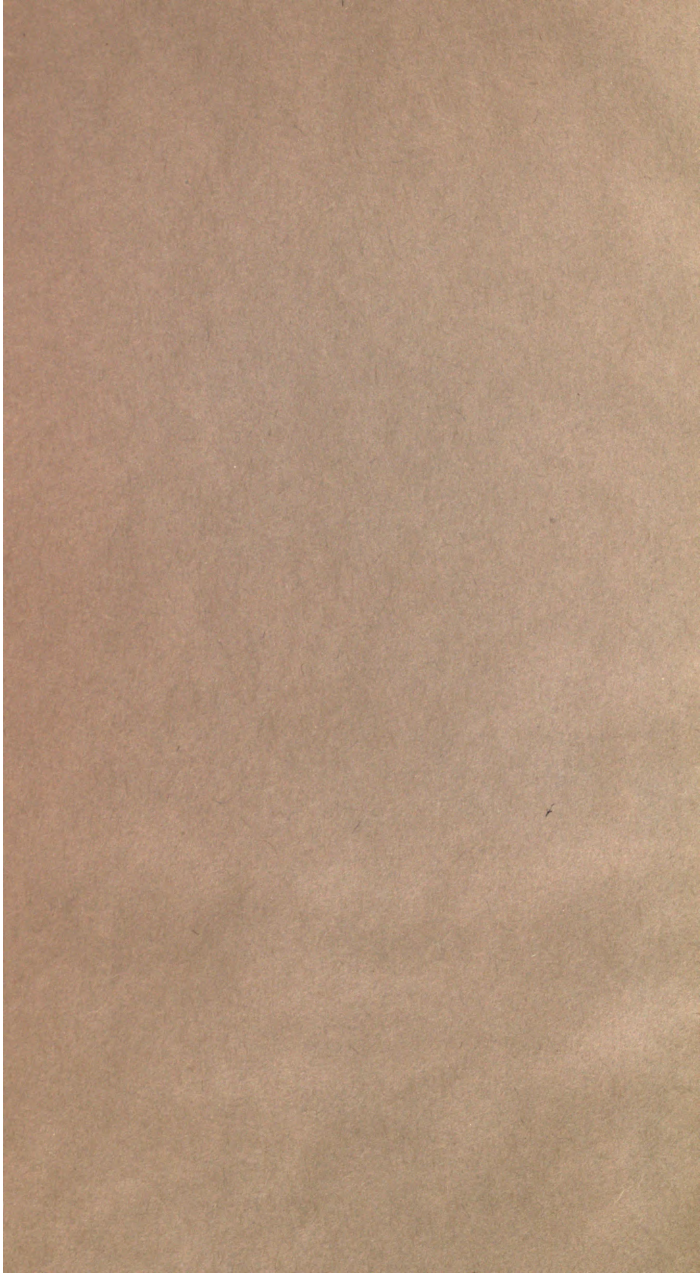

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A

LETTER

FROM

EDMUND BURKE, Esq

One of the Representatives in Parliament
for the City of BRISTOL,

TO

JOHN FARR and JOHN HARRIS, Esqrs.
Sheriffs of that City,

ON THE

AFFAIRS OF AMERICA

LONDON:
Printed for J. DODSLEY, in PALL-MALL.
M DCC LXXVII.

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A LETTER, &c.

GENTLEMEN,

I HAVE the honour of ſending you the two laſt acts which have been paſſed with regard to the troubles in America. Theſe acts are ſimilar to all the reſt which have been made on the ſame ſubject. They operate by the ſame principle; and they are derived from the very ſame policy. I think they complete the number of this ſort of ſtatutes to nine. It affords no matter for very pleaſing reflection, to obſerve, that our ſubjects diminiſh, as our laws encreaſe.

APR 26 1938

If I have the misfortune of differing with ſome of my fellow-citizens on this great and arduous ſubject, it is no ſmall conſolation to me, that I do not differ from you. With you,

HARDING

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I am perfectly united. We are heartily agreed in our deteſtation of a civil war. We have ever expreſſed the moſt unqualified diſapprobation of all the ſteps which have led to it, and of all thoſe which tend to prolong it. And I have no doubt that we feel exactly the ſame emotions of grief and ſhame on all its miſerable conſequences; whether they appear, on the one ſide or the other, in the ſhape of victories or defeats; of captures made from the Engliſh on the continent, or from the Engliſh in theſe iſlands; of legiſlative regulations which ſubvert the liberties of our brethren, or which undermine our own.

Of the firſt of theſe ſtatutes (that for the letter of marque) I ſhall ſay little. Exceptionable as it may be, and as I think it is in ſome particulars, it ſeems the natural, perhaps neceſſary reſult of the meaſures we have taken, and the ſituation we are in. The other (for a partial ſuſpenſion of the *Habeas Corpus*) appears to me of a much deeper malignity. During its progreſs through the Houſe of Commons, it has been amended, ſo as to expreſs more diſtinctly than at firſt it did, the avowed ſentiments of thoſe who framed it: and the main ground of my exception to it is, becauſe it does expreſs, and does carry into execution, purpoſes which appear to me ſo contradictory to all the principles, not only of the conſtitutional policy of Great Britain, but

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even of that ſpecies of hoſtile juſtice, which no aſperity of war wholly extinguiſhes in the minds of a civilized people.

It ſeems to have in view two capital objects; the firſt, to enable adminiſtration to confine, as long as it ſhall think proper, (within the duration of the act) thoſe, whom that act is pleaſed to qualify by the name of *Pirates*. Thoſe ſo qualified, I underſtand to be, the commanders and mariners of ſuch privateers and ſhips of war belonging to the colonies, as in the courſe of this unhappy conteſt may fall into the hands of the crown. They are therefore to be detained in priſon, under the criminal deſcription of piracy, to a future trial and ignominious puniſhment, whenever circumſtances ſhall make it convenient to execute vengeance on them, under the colour of that odious and infamous offence.

To this firſt purpoſe of the law, I have no ſmall diſlike. Becauſe the act does not (as all laws, and all equitable tranſactions ought to do) fairly deſcribe its object. The perſons, who make a naval war upon us, in conſequence of the preſent troubles, may be *rebels*; but to call and treat them as *pirates*, is confounding, not only the natural diſtinction of things, but the order of crimes; which, whether by putting them from a higher part of the ſcale to the lower, or from the lower to the higher, is

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never done without dangerouſly diſordering the whole frame of juriſprudence. Though piracy may be, in the eye of the law, a *leſs* offence than treaſon; yet as both are, in effect, puniſhed with the ſame death, the ſame forfeiture, and the ſame corruption of blood, I never would take from any fellow-creature whatever, any ſort of advantage, which he may derive to his ſafety from the pity of mankind, or to his reputation from their general feelings, by degrading his offence, when I cannot ſoften his puniſhment. The general ſenſe of mankind tells me, that thoſe offences, which may poſſibly ariſe from miſtaken virtue, are not in the claſs of infamous actions. Lord Coke, the oracle of the Engliſh law, conforms to that general ſenſe, where he ſays, that "thoſe "things which are of the higheſt criminality "may be of the leaſt diſgrace." The act prepares a ſort of maſqued proceeding, not honourable to the juſtice of the kingdom, and by no means neceſſary for its ſafety. I cannot enter into it. If lord Balmerino, in the laſt rebellion, had driven off the cattle of twenty clans, I ſhould have thought it a ſcandalous and low juggle, utterly unworthy of the manlineſs of an Engliſh judicature, to have tried him for felony, as a ſtealer of cows.

Beſides, I muſt honeſtly tell you, that I could not vote for, or countenance in any way, a ſtatute, which ſtigmatizes with the crime of piracy,

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piracy, thoſe men, whom an act of parliament had previouſly put out of the protection of the law. When the legiſlature of this kingdom had ordered all their ſhips and goods, for the mere new-created offence of exerciſing trade, to be divided as a ſpoil among the ſeamen of the navy,—for the ſame legiſlature afterwards to treat the neceſſary repriſal of an unhappy, proſcribed, interdicted people, as the crime of piracy, ſeems harſh and incongruous. Such a procedure would have appeared (in any other legiſlature than ours) a ſtrain of the moſt inſulting and moſt unnatural cruelty and injuſtice. I aſſure you, I do not remember to have heard of any thing like it in any time or country.

The ſecond profeſſed purpoſe of the act is to detain in England for trial, thoſe who ſhall commit high treaſon in America.

That you may be enabled to enter into the true ſpirit of the preſent law, it is neceſſary, gentlemen, to appriſe you, that there is an act, made ſo long ago as the reign of Henry the eighth, before the exiſtence or thought of any Engliſh colonies in America, for the trial in this kingdom of treaſons committed out of the realm. In the year 1769, parliament thought proper to acquaint the crown with their conſtruction of that act, in a formal addreſs, wherein they intreated his Majeſty, to cauſe perſons, charged with high treaſon in America, to be brought into this kingdom for trial. By

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this act of Henry the eighth, *ſo conſtrued and ſo applied*, almoſt all that is ſubſtantial and beneficial in a trial by jury is taken away from the ſubject in the colonies. This is however ſaying too little; for to try a man under that act is, in effect, to condemn him unheard. A perſon is brought hither in the dungeon of a ſhip's hold: thence he is vomited into a dungeon on land; loaded with irons, unfurniſhed with money, unſupported by friends, three thouſand miles from all means of calling upon, or confronting evidence, where no one local circumſtance that tends to detect perjury, can poſſibly be judged of;—ſuch a perſon may be executed according to form, but he can never be tried according to juſtice.

I therefore could by no means reconcile myſelf to the bill I ſend you; which is expreſsly provided to remove all inconveniences from the eſtabliſhment of a mode of trial, which has ever appeared to me moſt unjuſt and moſt unconſtitutional. Far from removing the difficulties which impede the execution of ſo miſchievous a project, I would heap new difficulties upon it, if it were in my power. All the ancient, honeſt juridical principles, and inſtitutions of England, are ſo many clogs to check and retard the headlong courſe of violence and oppreſſion. They were invented for this one good purpoſe;—that what was not juſt ſhould not be convenient. Convinced of this, I would

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leave things as I found them. The old, cool-headed, general law, is as good as any deviation dictated by preſent heat.

I could ſee no fair juſtifiable expedience pleaded to favour this new ſuſpenſion of the liberty of the ſubject. If the Engliſh in the colonies can ſupport the independency to which they have been unfortunately driven, I ſuppoſe nobody has ſuch a fanatical zeal for the criminal juſtice of Henry the eighth, that he will contend for executions which muſt be retaliated tenfold on his own friends; or who has conceived ſo ſtrange an idea of Engliſh dignity, as to think the defeats in America compenſated by the triumphs at Tyburn. If, on the contrary, the colonies are reduced to the obedience of the crown, there muſt be, under that authority, tribunals in the country itſelf, fully competent to adminiſter juſtice on all offenders. But if there are not, and that we muſt ſuppoſe a thing ſo humiliating to our government, as that all this vaſt continent ſhould unanimouſly concur in thinking, that no ill fortune can convert reſiſtance to the royal authority into a criminal act, we may call the effect of our victory peace, or obedience, or what we will; but the war is not ended: The hoſtile mind continues in full vigour; and it continues under a worſe form. If your peace be nothing more than a ſullen pauſe from arms; if their quiet be nothing

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but the meditation of revenge, where ſmitten pride, ſmarting from its wounds, feſters into new rancour, neither the act of Henry the eighth, nor its handmaid of this reign, will anſwer any wiſe end of policy or juſtice. For if the bloody fields, which they ſaw and felt, are not ſufficient to ſubdue the reaſon of Americans (to uſe the expreſſive phraſe of a great lord in office) it is not the judicial ſlaughter, which is made in another hemiſphere againſt their univerſal ſenſe of juſtice, that will ever reconcile them to the Britiſh government.

I take it for granted, gentlemen, that we ſympathize in a proper horror of all puniſhment further than as it ſerves for an example. To whom then does the example of an execution in England for this American rebellion apply? Remember, you are told every day, that the preſent is a conteſt between the two countries; and that we in England are at war for *our own* dignity againſt our rebellious children. Is this true? If it be, it is ſurely among ſuch rebellious children that examples for diſobedience ſhould be made. For who ever thought of inſtructing parents in their duty by an example from the puniſhment of a diſobedient ſon? As well might the execution of a fugitive negro in the plantations, be conſidered as a leſſon to teach maſters humanity to their ſlaves. Such executions may indeed ſatiate our revenge; they may harden

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harden our hearts: and puff us up with pride and arrogance. Alas! this is not inſtruction.

If any thing can be drawn from ſuch examples by a parity of the caſe, it is to ſhew, how deep their crime, and how heavy their puniſhment will be, who ſhall at any time dare to reſiſt a diſtant power actually diſpoſing of their property, without their voice or conſent to the diſpoſition; and overturning their franchiſes without charge or hearing. God forbid, that England ſhould ever read this leſſon written in the blood of *any* of her off-ſpring!

War is at preſent carried on, between the king's natural and foreign troops, on one ſide, and the Engliſh in America, on the other, upon the uſual footing of other wars; and accordingly an exchange of priſoners has been regularly made from the beginning. If, notwithſtanding this hitherto equal procedure, upon ſome proſpect of ending the war with ſucceſs, (which however may be deluſive) adminiſtration prepares to act againſt thoſe as *traitors* who remain in their hands at the end of the troubles, in my opinion we ſhall exhibit to the world as indecent a piece of injuſtice as ever civil fury has produced. If the priſoners who have been exchanged have not by that exchange been *virtually pardoned*, the cartel (whether

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(whether avowed or underſtood) is a cruel fraud: for you have received the life of a man; and you ought to return a life for it, or there is no parity or fairneſs in the tranſaction.

If, on the other hand, we admit, that they, who are actually exchanged are pardoned, but contend that we may juſtly reſerve for vengeance, thoſe who remain unexchanged; then this unpleaſant and unhandſome conſequence will follow; that you judge of the delinquency of men merely by the time of their guilt, and not by the heinouſneſs of it; and you make fortune and accidents, and not the moral qualities of human action, the rule of your juſtice.

Theſe ſtrange incongruities muſt ever perplex thoſe, who confound the unhappineſs of civil diſſention, with the crime of treaſon. Whenever a rebellion really and truly exiſts, (which is as eaſily known in fact, as it is difficult to define in words) government has not entered into ſuch military conventions; but has ever declined all intermediate treaty, which ſhould put rebels in poſſeſſion of the law of nations with regard to war. Commanders would receive no benefits at their hands, becauſe they could make no return for them. Who has ever heard of capitulation, and parole of honour, and exchange of priſoners, in the late rebellions in this kingdom? The anſwer to all demands of that ſort was,

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"we can engage for nothing; you are at the "king's pleaſure." We ought to remember, that if our preſent enemies be, in reality and truth, rebels, the king's generals have no right to releaſe them upon any conditions whatſoever; and they are themſelves anſwerable to the law, and as much in want of a pardon for doing ſo, as the rebels whom they releaſe.

Lawyers, I know, cannot make the diſtinction, for which I contend; becauſe they have their ſtrict rule to go by. But legiſlators ought to do what lawyers cannot; for they have no other rules to bind them, but the great principles of reaſon and equity, and the general ſenſe of mankind. Theſe they are bound to obey and follow; and rather to enlarge and enlighten law by the liberality of legiſlative reaſon, than to fetter and bind their higher capacity by the narrow conſtructions of ſubordinate artificial juſtice. If we had adverted to this, we never could conſider the convulſions of a great empire, not diſturbed by a little diſſeminated faction, but divided by whole commuities and provinces, and entire legal repreſentatives of a people, as fit matter of diſcuſſion under a commiſſion of oyer and terminer. It is as oppoſite to reaſon and prudence, as it is to humanity and juſtice.

This act, proceeding on theſe principles, that is, preparing to end the preſent troubles by

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by a trial of one ſort of hoſtility, under the name of piracy, and of another by the name of treaſon, and executing the act of Henry the eighth according to a new and unconſtitutional interpretation, I have thought evil and dangerous, even though the inſtruments of effecting ſuch purpoſes had been merely of a neutral quality.

But it really appears to me, that the means which this act employs are, at leaſt, as exceptionable as the end. Permit me to open myſelf a little upon this ſubject, becauſe it is of importance to me, when I am obliged to ſubmit to the power without acquieſcing in the reaſon of an act of legiſlature, that I ſhould juſtify my diſſent, by ſuch arguments as may be ſuppoſed to have weight with a ſober man.

The main operative regulation of the act is to ſuſpend the common law, and the ſtatute *Habeas Corpus*, (the ſole ſecurities either for liberty or juſtice) with regard to all thoſe who have been out of the realm or on the high ſeas, within a given time. The reſt of the people, as I underſtand, are to continue as they ſtood before.

I confeſs, gentlemen, that this appears to me, as bad in the principle, and far worſe in its conſequence, than an univerſal ſuſpenſion of the *Habeas Corpus* act; and the limiting qualifi-

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qualification, inſtead of taking out the ſting, does in my humble opinion ſharpen and envenom it to a greater degree. Liberty, if I underſtand it at all, is a *general* principle, and the clear right of all the ſubjects within the realm, or of none. Partial freedom ſeems to me a moſt invidious mode of ſlavery. But, unfortunately, it is the kind of ſlavery the moſt eaſily admitted in times of civil diſcord. For parties are but too apt to forget their own future ſafety in their deſire of ſacrificing their enemies. People without much difficulty admit the entrance of that injuſtice of which they are not to be the immediate victims. In times of high proceeding, it is never the faction of the predominant power that is in danger; for no tyranny chaſtiſes its own inſtruments. It is the obnoxious and the ſuſpected who want the protection of law; and there is nothing to bridle the partial violence of ſtate factions, but this great, ſteady, uniform principle; "that "whenever an act is made for a ceſſation "of law and juſtice, the whole people "ſhould be univerſally ſubjected to the ſame "ſuſpenſion of their franchiſes." The alarm of ſuch a proceeding would then be univerſal. It would operate as a ſort of *call of the nation*. It would become every man's immediate and inſtant concern to be made very ſenſible of *the abſolute neceſſity* of this total eclipſe of liberty. They would more carefully advert to every renewal, and more powerfully reſiſt it. Theſe great determined meaſures are not commonly

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ſo dangerous to freedom. They are marked with too ſtrong lines to ſlide into uſe. No plea or pretence of mere *inconvenience or evil example* (which muſt in their nature be daily and ordinary incidents) can be admitted as a reaſon for ſuch mighty operations. But the true danger is, when liberty is nibbled away, for expedients, and by parts. The *Habeas Corpus* act ſuppoſes (contrary to the genius of moſt other laws) that the lawful magiſtrate may ſee particular men with a malignant eye; and it provides for that identical caſe. But when men, *in particular deſcriptions, marked out by the magiſtrate himſelf*, are delivered over by parliament to this poſſible malignity, it is not the *Habeas Corpus* that is occaſionally ſuſpended, but its ſpirit that is miſtaken, and its principle that is ſubverted. Indeed nothing is ſecurity to any individual but the common intereſt of all.

This act, therefore, has this diſtinguiſhed evil in it, that it is the firſt *partial* ſuſpenſion of the *Habeas Corpus* which has been made. The precedent, which is always of very great importance, is now eſtabliſhed. For the firſt time a diſtinction is made among the people within this realm. Before this act, every man putting his foot on Engliſh ground, every ſtranger owing only a local and temporary allegiance, even a negro ſlave, who had been ſold in the colonies and under an act of parliament, became

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became as free as every other man who breathed the ſame air with him. Now a line is drawn, which may be advanced further and further at pleaſure, on the ſame argument of mere expedience, on which it was firſt deſcribed. There is no equality among us; we are not fellow-citizens, if the mariner who lands on the quay does not reſt on as firm legal ground, as the merchant who ſits in his compting-houſe. Other laws may injure the community, this tends to diſſolve it. It deſtroys *equality*, which is the eſſence of community. As things now ſtand, every man in the Weſt Indies, every one inhabitant of three unoffending provinces on the continent, every perſon coming from the Eaſt Indies, every gentleman who has travelled for his health or education, every mariner who has navigated the ſeas, is, for no other offence, under a temporary proſcription. Let any of theſe facts (now become preſumptions of guilt) be proved againſt him, and the bare ſuſpicion of the crown puts him out of the law. It is even by no means clear to me, whether the negative proof does not lie upon the perſon apprehended on ſuſpicion, to the ſubverſion of all juſtice.

I have not debated againſt this bill in its progreſs through the Houſe; becauſe it would have been vain to oppoſe, and impoſſible to correct it. It is ſome time ſince I have been clearly convinced, that in the preſent ſtate of things, all oppoſition to any meaſures propoſed by

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by miniſters, where the name of America appears, is vain and frivolous. You may be ſure, that I do not ſpeak of my oppoſition, which in all circumſtances muſt be ſo; but that of men of the greateſt wiſdom and authority in the nation. Every thing propoſed *againſt* America is ſuppoſed of courſe to be *in favour* of Great Britain. Good and ill ſucceſs are equally admitted as reaſons for perſevering in the preſent methods. Several very prudent, and very well intentioned perſons were of opinion, that during the prevalence of ſuch diſpoſitions, all ſtruggle tended rather to inflame than to abate the diſtemper of the public counſels. Finding ſuch reſiſtance to be conſidered as factious by moſt within doors, and by very many without, I could not conſcientiouſly ſupport what is againſt my opinion, nor prudently contend with what I know is irreſiſtible.

Preſerving my principles unſhaken, I reſerve my activity for rational endeavours; and I hope my paſt conduct has given ſufficient evidence, that if I am a ſingle day from my place, it is not owing to indolence or love of diſſipation. The ſlighteſt hope of doing good is ſufficient to recal me to a ſtation which I quitted with regret. In declining my uſual ſtrict attendance, I do not in the leaſt condemn the ſpirit of thoſe gentlemen, who, with a juſt confidence in their abilities, (in which I claim a ſort of ſhare from my love and admiration of them) were of opinion that their exertions in this deſperate caſe might be of ſome ſervice.

They

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They thought, that by contracting the ſphere of its application, they might leſſen the malignity of an evil principle. Perhaps they were in the right. But when my opinion was ſo very clearly to the contrary, for the reaſons I have juſt ſtated, I am ſure *my* attendance would have been ridiculous.

I muſt add, in further explanation of my conduct, that, far from ſoftening the features of ſuch a principle, and thereby removing any part of the popular odium or natural terrors attending it, I ſhould be ſorry, that any thing framed in contradiction to the ſpirit of our conſtitution did not inſtantly produce in fact, the groſſeſt of the evils, with which it was pregnant in its nature. It is by lying dormant a long time, or being at firſt very rarely exerciſed, that arbitrary power ſteals upon a people. On the next unconſtitutional act, all the faſhionable world will be ready to ſay—Your prophecies are ridiculous, your fears are vain, you ſee how little of the miſchiefs which you formerly foreboded are come to paſs. Thus, by degrees, that artful ſoftening of all arbitrary power, the alledged infrequency or narrow extent of its operation, will be received as a ſort of aphoriſm—and Mr. *Hume* will not be ſingular in telling us, that the felicity of mankind is no more diſturbed by it, than by earthquakes, or thunder,

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or the other more unuſual accidents of nature.

The act of which I have ſaid ſo much is among the fruits of the American war; a war, in my humble opinion, productive of many miſchiefs of a kind, which diſtinguiſh it from all others. Not only our policy is deranged, and our empire diſtracted, but our laws and our legiſlative ſpirit are in danger of being totally perverted by it. We have made war on our Colonies, not by arms only, but by laws. As hoſtility and law are not very concordant ideas, every ſtep we have taken in this buſineſs, has been made by trampling on ſome maxim of juſtice, or ſome capital principle of wiſe government. What precedents were eſtabliſhed, and what principles overturned, (I will not ſay of Engliſh privilege, but of general juſtice), in the Boſton Port, the Maſſachuſets Charter, the Military Bill, and all that long array of hoſtile acts of parliament, by which the war with America has been begun and ſupported? Had the principles of any of theſe acts been firſt planted on Engliſh ground they would probably have expired as ſoon as they touched it. But by being removed from our perſons, they have rooted in our laws; and the lateſt poſterity will taſte the fruits of them.

Nor

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Nor is it the worſt effect of this unnatural contention, that our *laws* are corrupted. Whilſt *manners* remain entire, they will correct the vices of law, and ſoften it at length to their own temper. But we have to lament, that in moſt of the late proceedings we ſee very few traces of that generoſity, humanity, and dignity of mind, which formerly characterized this nation. War ſuſpends the rules of moral obligation; and what is long ſuſpended is in danger of being totally abrogated. Civil wars ſtrike deepeſt of all into the manners of a people. They vitiate their politicks; they corrupt their morals; they pervert even the natural taſte and reliſh of equity and juſtice. By teaching us to conſider our fellow-citizens in an hoſtile light, the whole body of our nation becomes gradually leſs dear to us. The very names of affection and kindred, which were the bond of charity whilſt we agreed, become new incentives to hatred and rage, when the communion of our country is diſſolved. We may flatter ourſelves that we ſhall not fall into this misfortune. But we have no charter of exemption, that I know of, from the ordinary frailties of our nature.

What but that blindneſs of heart which ariſes from the phrenſy of civil contention, could have made any perſons conceive the

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preſent ſituation of the Britiſh affairs as an object of triumph to themſelves, or of congratulation to their ſovereign? Nothing ſurely could be more lamentable to thoſe who remember the flouriſhing days of this kingdom, than to ſee the inſane joy of ſeveral unhappy people, amidſt the ſad ſpectacle which our affairs and conduct exhibit to the ſcorn of Europe. We behold (and it ſeems ſome people rejoice in beholding) our native land, which uſed to ſit the envied arbiter of all her neighbours, reduced to a ſervile dependence on their mercy; acquieſcing in aſſurances of friendſhip which ſhe does not truſt; complaining of hoſtilities which ſhe dares not reſent; deficient to her allies; lofty to her ſubjects; and ſubmiſſive to her enemies; whilſt the liberal government of this free nation is ſupported by the hireling ſword of German boors and vaſſals; and three millions of the ſubjects of Great-Britain are ſeeking for protection to Engliſh privileges in the arms of France!

Theſe circumſtances appear to me more like ſhocking prodigies, than natural changes in human affairs. Men of firmer minds may ſee them without ſtaggering or aſtoniſhment.—Some may think them matters of congratulation and complimentary addreſſes; but I truſt your candour will be ſo indulgent to my weakneſs, as not to have the worſe opinion of me

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me for my declining to participate in this joy; and my rejecting all ſhare whatſoever in ſuch a triumph. I am too old, too ſtiff in my inveterate partialities, to be ready at all the faſhionable evolutions of opinion. I ſcarcely know how to adapt my mind to the feelings with which the Court Gazettes mean to impreſs the people. It is not inſtantly that I can be brought to rejoice, when I hear of the ſlaughter and captivity of long liſts of thoſe names which have been familiar to my ears from my infancy; and to rejoice that they have fallen under the ſword of ſtrangers, whoſe barbarous appellations I ſcarcely know how to pronounce. The glory acquired at the *White Plains* by *Colonel Raille*, has no charms for me; and I fairly acknowledge, that I have not yet learned to delight in finding *Fort Kniphauſen* in the heart of the Britiſh dominions.

It might be ſome conſolation for the loſs of our old regards, if our reaſon were enlightened in proportion as our honeſt prejudices are removed. Wanting feelings for the honour of our country, we might then in cold blood be brought to think a little of our intereſts as individual citizens, and our private conſcience as moral agents.

Indeed our affairs are in a bad condition. I do aſſure thoſe Gentlemen who have prayed

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for war, and obtained the bleſſing they have ſought, that they are at this inſtant in very great ſtraits. The abuſed wealth of this country continues a little longer to feed its diſtemper. As yet they, and their German allies of twenty hireling ſtates, have contended only with the unprepared ſtrength of our own infant colonies. But America is not ſubdued. Not one unattacked village, which was originally adverſe, throughout that vaſt continent, has yet ſubmitted from love or terror. You have the ground you encamp on; and you have no more. The cantonments of your troops and your dominions are exactly of the ſame extent. You ſpread devaſtation, but you do not enlarge the ſphere of authority.

The events of this war are of ſo much greater magnitude than thoſe who either wiſhed or feared it, ever looked for, that this alone ought to fill every conſiderate mind with anxiety and diffidence. Wiſe men often tremble at the very things which fill the thoughtleſs with ſecurity. For many reaſons I do not chooſe to expoſe to public view, all the particulars of the ſtate in which you ſtood with regard to foreign powers, during the whole courſe of the laſt year. Whether you are yet wholly out of danger from thoſe powers, is more than I know, or than your rulers can divine. But even if I were certain of my ſafety, I could not eaſily forgive thoſe who

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who had brought me into the moſt dreadful perils, becauſe by accidents, unforeſeen by them or me, I have eſcaped.

Believe me, gentlemen, the way ſtill before you is intricate, dark, and full of perplexed and treacherous mazes. Thoſe who think they have the clue, may lead us out of this labyrinth. We may truſt them as amply as we think proper. But as they have moſt certainly a call for all the reaſon which their ſtock can furniſh, why ſhould we think it proper to diſturb its operation by inflaming their paſſions? I may be unable to lend an helping hand to thoſe who direct the ſtate; but I ſhould be aſhamed to make myſelf one of a noiſy multitude to hollow and hearten them into doubtful and dangerous courſes. A conſcientious man would be cautious how he dealt in blood. He would feel ſome apprehenſion at being called to a tremendous account for engaging in ſo deep a play, without any ſort of knowledge of the game. It is no excuſe for preſumptuous ignorance, that it is directed by inſolent paſſion. The pooreſt being that crawls on earth, contending to ſave itſelf from injuſtice and oppreſſion, is an object reſpectable in the eyes of God and man. But I cannot conceive any exiſtence under heaven, (which, in the depths of its wiſdom, tolerates all ſorts of things) that is more truly odious and diſguſting, than an impotent helpleſs creature,

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without civil wiſdom or military ſkill, without a conſciouſneſs of any other qualification for power but his ſervility to it, bloated with pride and arrogance, calling for battles which he is not to fight, contending for a violent dominion which he can never exerciſe, and ſatisfied to be himſelf mean and miſerable, in order to render others contemptible and wretched.

If you and I find our talents not of the great and ruling kind, our conduct at leaſt is conformable to our faculties. No man's life pays the forfeit of our raſhneſs. No deſolate widow weeps tears of blood over our ignorance. Scrupulous and ſober in our well-grounded diſtruſt of ourſelves, we would keep in the port of peace and ſecurity: and perhaps in recommending to others ſomething of the ſame diffidence, we ſhew ourſelves more charitable to their welfare, than injurious to their abilities.

There are many circumſtances in the preſent zeal for civil war, which ſeem to diſcover but little of real magnanimity. The addreſſers offer their own perſons; and they are ſatisfied with hiring Germans. They promiſe their private fortunes; and they mortgage their country. They have all the merit of volunteers, without riſque of perſon or charge of contribution; and when the unfeeling arm of a foreign ſoldiery pours out their kindred blood like water, they exult and triumph, as if they themſelves had performed

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performed ſome notable exploit. I am really aſhamed of the faſhionable language which has been held for ſome time paſt; which, to ſay the beſt of it, is full of levity. You know, that I allude to the general cry againſt the cowardice of the Americans, as if we deſpiſed them for not making the King's ſoldiery purchaſe the advantages they have obtained, at a dearer rate. It is not, Gentlemen, it is not to reſpect the diſpenſations of Providence, nor to provide any decent retreat in the mutability of human affairs. It leaves no medium between inſolent victory and infamous defeat. It tends to alienate our minds further and further from our natural regards, and to make an eternal rent and ſchiſm in the Britiſh nation. Thoſe who do not wiſh for ſuch a ſeparation, would not diſſolve that cement of reciprocal eſteem and regard, which can alone bind together the parts of this great fabrick. It ought to be our wiſh, as it is our duty, not only to forbear this ſtyle of outrage ourſelves, but to make every one as ſenſible as we can of the impropriety and unworthineſs of the tempers which gave riſe to it, and which deſigning men are labouring with ſuch malignant induſtry to diffuſe amongſt us. It is our buſineſs to counteract them, if poſſible; if poſſible to awake our natural regards; and to revive the old partiality to the Engliſh name. Without ſomething of this kind I do not ſee how it is ever practicable really to reconcile with thoſe, whoſe

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whoſe affections, after all, muſt be the ſureſt hold of our government; and which are a thouſand times more worth to us, than the mercenary zeal of all the circles of Germany.

I can well conceive a country completely over-run, and miſerably waſted, without approaching in the leaſt to ſettlement. In my apprehenſion as long as Engliſh government is attempted to be ſupported over Engliſhmen by the ſword alone, things will thus continue. I anticipate in my mind the moment of the final triumph of foreign military force. When that hour arrives, (for it may arrive) then it is, that all this maſs of weakneſs and violence will appear in its full light. If we ſhould be expelled from America, the deluſion of the partizans of military government might ſtill continue. They might ſtill feed their imaginations with the poſſible good conſequences which might have attended ſucceſs. Nobody could prove the contrary by facts. But in caſe the ſword ſhould do all that the ſword can do, the ſucceſs of their arms and the defeat of their policy, will be one and the ſame thing. You will never ſee any revenue from America. Some increaſe of the means of corruption, without any eaſe of the public burthens, is the very beſt that can happen. Is it for this that we are at war; and in ſuch a war?

As to the difficulties of laying once more the foundations of that government, which, for

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the ſake of conquering what was our own, has been voluntarily and wantonly pulled down by a court faction here, I tremble to look at them. Has any of theſe Gentlemen, who are ſo eager to govern all mankind, ſhewed himſelf poſſeſſed of the firſt qualification towards government, ſome knowledge of the object, and of the difficulties which occur in the taſk they have undertaken?

I aſſure you, that on the moſt proſperous iſſue of your arms, you will not be where you ſtood, when you called in war to ſupply the defects of your political eſtabliſhment. Nor would any diſorder or diſobedience to government which could ariſe from the moſt abject conceſſion on our part, ever equal thoſe which will be felt, after the moſt triumphant violence. You have got all the intermediate evils of war into the bargain.

I think I know America. If I do not, my ignorance is incurable, for I have ſpared no pains to underſtand it; and I do moſt ſolemnly aſſure thoſe of my Conſtituents who put any ſort of confidence in my induſtry and integrity, that every thing that has been done there has ariſen from a total miſconception of the object: that our means of originally holding America, that our means of reconciling with it after quarrel, of recovering it after ſeparation, of keeping it after victory, did depend, and muſt

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muſt depend, in their ſeveral ſtages and periods, upon a total renunciation of that unconditional ſubmiſſion, which has taken ſuch poſſeſſion of the minds of violent men. The whole of thoſe maxims, upon which we have made and continued this war, muſt be abandoned. Nothing indeed (for I would not deceive you) can place us in our former ſituation. That hope muſt be laid aſide. But there is a difference between bad and the worſt of all. Terms relative to the cauſe of the war ought to be offered by the authority of parliament. An arrangement at home promiſing ſome ſecurity for them ought to be made. By doing this, without the leaſt impairing of our ſtrength, we add to the credit of our moderation, which in itſelf, is always ſtrength more or leſs.

I know many have been taught to think, rhat moderation, in a caſe like this, is a ſort of treaſon: and that all arguments for it are ſufficiently anſwered by railing at rebels and rebellion, and by charging all the preſent or future miſeries which we may ſuffer, on the reſiſtance of our brethren. But I would wiſh them, in this grave matter, and if peace is not wholly removed from their hearts, to conſider ſeriouſly, firſt,—that to criminate and recriminate never yet was the road to reconciliation, in any difference amongſt men. In the next place, it would be right to reflect, that

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that the American Engliſh (whom they may abuſe, if they think it honourable to revile the abſent) can, as things now ſtand, neither be provoked at our railing, or bettered by our inſtruction. All communication is cut off between us. But this we know with certainty; that though we cannot reclaim them, we may reform ourſelves. If meaſures of peace are neceſſary, they muſt begin ſomewhere; and a conciliatory temper muſt precede and prepare every plan of reconciliation. Nor do I conceive that we ſuffer any thing by thus regulating our own minds. We are not diſarmed by being diſencumbered of our paſſions. Declaiming on Rebellion never added a bayonet, or a charge of powder, to your military force; but I am afraid that it has been the means of taking up many a muſket againſt you.

This outrageous language, which has been encouraged and kept alive by every art, has already done incredible miſchief. For a long time, even amidſt the deſolations of war, and the inſults of hoſtile laws daily accumulated on one another, the American leaders ſeem to have had the greateſt difficulty in bringing up their people to a declaration of total independence. But the Court Gazette accompliſhed what the abettors of independence had attempted in vain. When that diſingenuous compilation, and ſtrange medley of railing and flattery, was adduced, as a proof of the united ſentiments

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ments of the people of Great Britain, there was a great change throughout all America. The tide of popular affection, which had ſtill ſet towards the parent country, began immediately to turn; and to flow with great rapidity in a contrary courſe. Far from concealing theſe wild declarations of enmity, the author of the celebrated pamphlet which prepared the minds of the people for independence, inſiſts largely on the multitude and the ſpirit of theſe Addreſſes; and he draws an argument from them, which (if the fact were as he ſuppoſes) muſt be irreſiſtible. For I never knew a writer on the theory of government, ſo partial to authority, as not to allow, that the *hoſtile mind* of the rulers to their people, did fully juſtify a change of government. Nor can any reaſon whatever be given, why one people ſhould voluntarily yield any degree of pre-eminence to another, but on a ſuppoſition of great affection and benevolence towards them. Unfortunately your rulers, truſting to other things, took no notice of this great principle of connexion. From the beginning of this affair, they have done all they could to alienate your minds from your own kindred; and if they could excite hatred enough in one of the parties towards the other, they ſeemed to be of opinion that they had gone half way towards reconciling the quarrel.

I know it is ſaid, that your kindneſs is only alienated on account of their reſiſtance; and therefore

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therefore if the colonies ſurrender at diſcretion all ſort of regard, and even much indulgence is meant towards them in future. But can thoſe who are partizans for continuing a war to enforce ſuch a ſurrender, be reſponſible, (after all that has paſſed) for ſuch a future uſe of a power, that is bound by no compacts, and reſtrained by no terrors? Will they tell us what they call indulgences? Do they not at this inſtant call the preſent war and all its horrors, a lenient and merciful proceeding?

No conqueror, that I ever heard of, has *profeſſed* to make a cruel, harſh, and inſolent uſe of his conqueſt. No! The man of the moſt declared pride, ſcarcely dares to truſt his own heart, with this dreadful ſecret of ambition. But it will appear in its time; and no man who profeſſes to reduce another to the inſolent mercy of a foreign arm, ever had any ſort of good-will towards him. The profeſſion of kindneſs, with that ſword in his hand, and that demand of ſurrender, is one of the moſt provoking acts of his hoſtility. I ſhall be told, that all this is lenient, as againſt rebellious adverſaries. But are the leaders of their faction more lenient to thoſe who ſubmit! Lord Howe and General Howe have powers under an Act of Parliament, to reſtore to the King's peace and to free trade any men, or diſtrict, which ſhall ſubmit. Is this done? We have been over and over informed by the authoriſed

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authoriſed Gazette, that the city of New York and the countries of Staten and Long Iſland have ſubmitted voluntarily and cheerfully, and that many in theſe places are full even of zeal to the cauſe of Adminiſtration. Were they inſtantly reſtored to trade? Are they yet reſtored to it? Is not the benignity of two commiſſioners, naturally moſt humane and generous men, ſome way fettered by inſtructions, equally againſt their diſpoſitions and the ſpirit of parliamentary faith, when Mr. Tryon, vaunting of the fidelity of the City in which he is Governor, is obliged to apply to miniſtry for leave to protect the King's loyal ſubjects, and to grant to them (not the diſputed rights and privileges of freedom) but the common rights of men, by the name of *Graces*? Why do not the commiſſioners reſtore them on the ſpot? Were they not named as commiſſioners for that expreſs purpoſe? But we ſee well enough to what the whole leads. The trade of America is to be dealt out in *private indulgences and graces*; that is in jobbs to recompence the incendiaries of war. *They* will be informed of the proper time in which to ſend out their merchandiſe. From a national, the American trade is to be turned into a perſonal monopoly: and one ſet of Merchants are to be rewarded for the pretended zeal, of which another ſet are the dupes; and thus between craft and credulity, the voice of reaſon is ſtifled; and all the miſconduct, all the calamities of the war are covered and continued.

If

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If I had not lived long enough to be little ſurprized at any thing, I ſhould have been in ſome degree aſtoniſhed at the continued rage of ſeveral Gentlemen, who, not ſatisfied with carrying fire and ſword into America, are animated nearly with the ſame fury againſt thoſe neighbours of theirs, whoſe only crime it is, that they have charitably and humanely wiſhed them to entertain more reaſonable ſentiments, and not always to ſacrifice their intereſt to their paſſion. All this rage againſt unreſiſting diſſent, convinces me, that at bottom they are far from ſatisfied they are in the right. For what is it they would have? A war? They certainly have at this moment the bleſſing of ſomething that is very like one; and if the war they enjoy at preſent be not ſufficiently hot and extenſive, they may ſhortly have it as warm and as ſpreading as their hearts can deſire. Is it the force of the Kingdom they call for? They have it already; and if they chooſe to fight their battles in their own perſon, no body prevents their ſetting ſail to America in the next tranſports. Do they think, that the ſervice is ſtinted for want of liberal ſupplies? Indeed they complain without reaſon. The table of the Houſe of Commons will glut them, let their appetite for expence be never ſo keen. And I aſſure them further, that thoſe who think with them in the Houſe of Commons are full as eaſy in the

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control, as they are liberal in the vote of theſe expences. If this be not ſupply or confidence ſufficient, let them open their own private purſe ſtrings and give from what is left to them, as largely and with as little care as they think proper.

Tolerated in their paſſions, let them learn not to perſecute the moderation of their fellow-citizens. If all the world joined them in a full cry againſt rebellion, and were as hotly inflamed againſt the whole theory and enjoyment of freedom, as thoſe who are the moſt factious for ſervitude, it could not in my opinion anſwer any one end whatſoever in this conteſt. The leaders of this war could not hire (to gratify their friends) one German more, than they do; or inſpire him with leſs feeling for the perſons, or leſs value for the privileges of their revolted brethren. If we all adopted their ſentiments to a man, their allies the ſavage Indians, could not be more ferocious than they are: They could not murder one more helpleſs woman or child, or with more exquiſite refinements of cruelty torment to death one more of their Engliſh fleſh and blood, than they do already. The public money is given to purchaſe this alliance;—and they have their bargain.

They are continually boaſting of unanimity, or calling for it. But before this unanimity can

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can be matter either of wiſh or congratulation, we ought to be pretty ſure, that we are engaged in a rational purſuit. Phrenſy does not become a ſlighter diſtemper on account of the number of thoſe who may be infected with it. Deluſion and weakneſs produce not one miſchief the leſs, becauſe they are univerſal. I declare, that I cannot diſcern the leaſt advantage, which could accrue to us, if we were able to perſuade our Colonies that they had not a ſingle friend in Great Britain. On the contrary, if the affections and opinions of mankind be not exploded as principles of connexion, I conceive it would be happy for us, if they were taught to believe, that there was even a formed American party in England, to whom they could always look for ſupport! Happy would it be for us, if in all tempers they might turn their eyes to the parent ſtate; ſo that their very turbulence and ſedition ſhould find vent in no other place than this. I believe there is not a man (except thoſe who prefer the intereſt of ſome paltry faction to the very being of their country) who would not wiſh that the Americans ſhould from time to time carry many points, and even ſome of them not quite reaſonable, by the aid of any denomination of men here, rather than they ſhould be driven to ſeek for protection againſt the fury of foreign mercenaries, and the waſte of ſavages, in the arms of France.

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When any community is ſubordinately connected with another, the great danger of the connexion is the extreme pride and ſelf-complacency of the ſuperior, which in all matters of controverſy will probably decide in its own favour. It is a powerful corrective to ſuch a very rational cauſe of fear, if the inferior body can be made to believe, that the party inclination or political views of ſeveral in the principal ſtate, will induce them in ſome degree to counteract this blind and tyrannic partiality. There is no danger that any one acquiring conſideration or power in the preſiding ſtate ſhould carry this leaning to the inferior too far. The fault of human nature is not of that ſort. Power in whatever hands is rarely guilty of too ſtrict limitations on itſelf. But one great advantage to the ſupport of authority attends ſuch an amicable and protecting connexion, that thoſe who have conferred favours obtain influence; and from the foreſight of future events can perſuade men who have received obligations ſometimes to return them. Thus by the mediation of thoſe healing principles, (call them good or evil) troubleſome diſcuſſions are brought to ſome ſort of adjuſtment; and every hot controverſy is not a civil war.

But, if the Colonies (to bring the general matter home to us) could ſee, that in Great Britain the maſs of the people is melted into its Government, and that every diſpute with the Miniſtry

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Miniſtry muſt of neceſſity be always a quarrel with the nation; they can ſtand no longer in the equal and friendly relation of fellow-citizens to the ſubjects of this Kingdom. Humble as this relation may appear to ſome, when it is once broken, a ſtrong tie is diſſolved. Other ſort of connexions will be ſought. For, there are very few in the world, who will not prefer an uſeful ally to an inſolent maſter.

Such diſcord has been the effect of the unanimity into which ſo many have of late been ſeduced or bullied, or into the appearance of which they have ſunk through mere deſpair. They have been told that their diſſent from violent meaſures is an encouragement to rebellion. Men of great preſumption and little knowledge will hold a language which is contradicted by the whole courſe of hiſtory. *General* rebellions and revolts of an whole people never were *encouraged*, now or at any time. They are always *provoked*. But if this unheard-of doctrine of the encouragement of rebellion were true, if it were true, that an aſſurance of the friendſhip of numbers in this country towards the colonies, could become an encouragement to them to break off all connexion with it, what is the inference? Does any body ſeriouſly maintain, that, charged with my ſhare of the public councils, I am obliged not to reſiſt projects which I think miſchievous, leſt men who ſuffer ſhould be en-

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couraged to reſiſt? The very tendency of ſuch projects to produce rebellion is one of the chief reaſons againſt them. Shall that reaſon not be given? Is it then a rule, that no man in this nation ſhall open his mouth in favour of the Colonies, ſhall defend their rights, or complain of their ſufferings? Or, when war finally breaks out, no man ſhall expreſs his deſires of peace? Has this been the law of our paſt, or is it to make the terms of our future connexion? Even looking no further than ourſelves, can it be true loyalty to any government, or true patriotiſm towards any country, to degrade their ſolemn councils into ſervile drawing-rooms, to flatter their pride and paſſions, rather than to enlighten their reaſon, and to prevent them from being cautioned againſt violence, leſt others ſhould be encouraged to reſiſtance! By ſuch acquieſcence great Kings and mighty nations have been undone; and if any are at this day in a perilous ſituation from rejecting truth, and liſtening to flattery, it would rather become them to reform the errors under which they ſuffer, than to reproach thoſe who have forewarned them of their danger.

But the rebels looked for aſſiſtance from this country. They did ſo in the beginning of this controverſy moſt certainly; and they ſought it by earneſt ſupplications to Government, which dignity rejected, and by a ſuſpenſion of com-

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merce, which the wealth of this nation enabled you to deſpiſe. When they found that neither prayers nor menaces had any ſort of weight, but that a firm reſolution was taken to reduce them to unconditional obedience by a military force, they came to the laſt extremity. Deſpairing of us, they truſted in themſelves. Not ſtrong enough themſelves, they ſought ſuccour in France. In proportion as all encouragement here leſſened, their diſtance from this country encreaſed. The encouragement is over; the alienation is compleat.

In order to produce this favourite unanimity in deluſion, and to prevent all poſſibility of a return to our antient happy concord, arguments for our continuance in this courſe are drawn from the wretched ſituation itſelf into which we have been betrayed. It is ſaid, that being at war with the Colonies, whatever our ſentiments might have been before, all ties between us are now diſſolved; and all the policy we have left is to ſtrengthen the hands of Government to reduce them. On the principle of this argument, the more miſchiefs we ſuffer from any adminiſtration, the more our truſt in it is to be confirmed. Let them but once get us into a war, their power is then ſafe, and an act of oblivion paſt for all their miſconduct.

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But is it really true, that Government is always to be ſtrengthened with the inſtruments of war, but never furniſhed with the means of peace? In former times miniſters, I allow, have been ſometimes driven by the popular voice to aſſert by arms the national honour againſt foreign powers. But the wiſdom of the nation has been far more clear, when thoſe miniſters have been compelled to conſult its intereſts by treaty. We all know that the ſenſe of the nation obliged the Court of King Charles the 2d, to abandon the *Dutch war*; a war next to the preſent the moſt impolitic which we ever carried on. The good people of England conſidered Holland as a ſort of dependency on this Kingdom; they dreaded to drive it to the protection, or to ſubject it to the power of France, by their own inconſiderate hoſtility. They paid but little reſpect to the court jargon of that day: They were not inflamed by the pretended rivalſhip of the Dutch in trade; by their Maſſacre at Amboyna, acted on the ſtage to provoke the public vengeance; nor by declamations againſt the ingratitude of the United Provinces for the benefits England had conferred upon them in their infant ſtate. They were not moved from their evident intereſt by all theſe arts; nor was it enough to tell them, they were at war; that they muſt go through with it; and that the cauſe of the diſpute was loſt in the conſequences. The people of England were then;

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then, as they are now, called upon to make government ſtrong. They thought it a great deal better to make it wiſe and honeſt.

When I was amongſt my conſtituents at the laſt Summer Aſſizes, I remember that men of all deſcriptions did then expreſs a very ſtrong deſire for peace, and no ſlight hopes of attaining it from the commiſſion ſent out by my lord Howe. And it is not a little remarkable, that in proportion as every perſon ſhewed a zeal for the court meaſures, he was at that time earneſt in circulating an opinion of the extent of the ſuppoſed powers of that commiſſion. When I told them that lord Howe had no powers to treat, or to promiſe ſatisfaction on any point whatſoever of the controverſy, I was hardly credited; ſo ſtrong and general was the deſire of terminating this war by the method of accommodation. As far as I could diſcover, this was the temper then prevalent through the kingdom. The king's forces, it muſt be obſerved, had at that time been obliged to evacuate Boſton. The ſuperiority of the former campaign reſted wholly with the Coloniſts. If ſuch powers of treaty were to be wiſhed, whilſt ſucceſs was very doubtful, how came they to be leſs ſo, ſince his Majeſty's arms have been crowned with many conſiderable advantages? Have theſe ſucceſſes induced us to alter our mind, as thinking the ſeaſon of victory not the time for

for treating with honour or advantage? Whatever changes have happened in the national character, it can ſcarcely be our wiſh, that terms of accommodation never ſhould be propoſed to our enemy, except when they muſt be attributed ſolely to our fears. It has happened, let me ſay unfortunately, that we read of his Majeſty's commiſſion for making peace, and his troops evacuating his laſt town in the thirteen colonies at the ſame hour, and in the ſame Gazette. It was ſtill more unfortunate, that no commiſſion went to America to ſettle the troubles there, until ſeveral months after an act had been paſſed to put the colonies out of the protection of this government, and to divide their trading property without a poſſibility of reſtitution, as ſpoil among the ſeamen of the navy. The moſt abject ſubmiſſion on the part of the colonies could not redeem them. There was no man on that whole continent, or within three thouſand miles of it, qualified by law to follow allegiance with protection, or ſubmiſſion with pardon. A proceeding of this kind has no example in hiſtory. Independency, and independency with an enmity (which putting ourſelves out of the queſtion would be called natural and much provoked) was the inevitable conſequence. How this came to paſs, the nation may be one day in an humour to enquire.

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All the attempts made this ſeſſion to give fuller powers of peace to the commanders in America, were ſtifled by the fatal confidence of victory, and the wild hopes of unconditional ſubmiſſion. There was a moment, favourable to the king's arms, when if any powers of conceſſion had exiſted, on the other ſide of the Atlantick, even after all our errors, peace in all probability might have been reſtored. But calamity is unhappily the uſual ſeaſon of reflexion; and the pride of men will not often ſuffer reaſon to have any ſcope until it can be no longer of ſervice.

I have always wiſhed, that as the diſpute had its apparent origin from things done in Parliament, and as the acts paſſed there had provoked the war, that the foundations of peace ſhould be laid in Parliament alſo. I have been aſtoniſhed to find, that thoſe whoſe zeal for the dignity of our body was ſo hot, as to light up the flames of civil war, ſhould even publickly declare, that theſe delicate points ought to be wholly left to the Crown. Poorly as I may be thought affected to the authority of Parliament, I ſhall never admit that our conſtitutional rights can ever become a matter of miniſterial negociation.

I am charged with being an American. If warm affection, towards thoſe over whom I claim any ſhare of authority, be a crime, I am

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am guilty of this charge. But I do aſſure you (and they who know me publickly and privately will bear witneſs to me) that if ever one man lived, more zealous than another, for the ſupremacy of Parliament, and the rights of this imperial Crown, it was myſelf. Many others indeed might be more knowing in the extent, or in the foundation of theſe rights. I do not pretend to be an Antiquary, or a Lawyer, or qualified for the chair of Profeſſor in Metaphyſics. I never ventured to put your ſolid intereſts upon ſpeculative grounds. My having conſtantly declined to do ſo has been attributed to my incapacity for ſuch diſquiſitions; and I am inclined to believe it is partly the cauſe. I never ſhall be aſhamed to confeſs, that where I am ignorant I am diffident. I am indeed not very ſollicitous to clear myſelf of this imputed incapacity; becauſe men, even leſs converſant than I am, in this kind of ſubtleties, and placed in ſtations, to which I ought not to aſpire, have, by the mere force of civil diſcretion, often conducted the affairs of great nations with diſtinguiſhed felicity and glory.

When I firſt came into a publick truſt, I found your Parliament in poſſeſſion of an unlimited legiſlative power over the Colonies. I could not open the Statute-Book, without ſeeing the actual exerciſe of it, more or leſs, in all caſes whatſoever. This poſſeſſion paſſed with

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with me for a title. It does ſo in all human affairs. No man examines into the defects of his title to his paternal eſtate, or to his eſtabliſhed government. Indeed common ſenſe taught me, that a legiſlative authority, not actually limited by the expreſs terms of its foundation, or by its own ſubſequent acts, cannot have its powers parcelled out by argumentative diſtinctions, ſo as to enable us to affirm, that here they can, and there they cannot bind. Nobody was ſo obliging as to produce to me any record of ſuch diſtinctions, by compact or otherwiſe, either at the ſucceſſive formation of the ſeveral Colonies, or during the exiſtence of any of them. If other Gentlemen were able to ſee, how one power could be given up, (merely on abſtract reaſoning) without giving up the reſt, I can only ſay, that they ſaw further than I could; nor did I ever preſume to condemn any one for being clear-ſighted, when I was blind. I praiſe their penetration and learning; and hope that their practice has been correſpondent to their theory.

I had indeed very earneſt wiſhes to keep the whole body of this authority perfect and entire as I found it, and to keep it ſo, not for our advantage ſolely, but principally for the ſake of thoſe, on whoſe account all juſt authority exiſts; I mean the people to be governed. For I thought I ſaw, that many caſes might well

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well happen, in which the exerciſe of every power, comprehended in the broadeſt idea of legiſlature, might become, in its time and circumſtances, not a little expedient for the peace and union of the Colonies amongſt themſelves, as well as for their perfect harmony with Great-Britain. Thinking ſo, (perhaps erroneouſly) but being honeſtly of that opinion, I was at the ſame time very ſure, that the authority of which I was ſo jealous, could not, under the actual circumſtances of our Plantations, be at all preſerved in any of its members, but by the greateſt reſerve in its application; particularly in thoſe delicate points, in which the feelings of mankind are the moſt irritable. They who thought otherwiſe, have found a few more difficulties in their work, than (I hope) they were thoroughly aware of, when they undertook the preſent buſineſs.

I muſt beg leave to obſerve, that it is not only the invidious branch of taxation that will be reſiſted, but that no other given part of legiſlative rights can be ſafely exerciſed, without regard to the general opinion of thoſe who are to be governed. That general opinion is the vehicle, and organ of legiſlative omnipotence. Without this, the extent of legiſlative power may be a theory to entertain the mind, but it is nothing in the direction of affairs. The compleatneſs of the legiſlative authority

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authority of Parliament *over this kingdom* is not queſtioned; and yet there are many things indubitably included in the abſtract idea of that power, and which carry no abſolute injuſtice in themſelves, which, being contrary to the opinions and feelings of the people, can as little be exerciſed, as if Parliament in ſuch caſes had been poſſeſſed of no right at all. I ſee no abſtract reaſon, which can be given, why the ſame power that made and repealed the High Commiſſion Court and the Star Chamber, might not revive them again; and theſe courts, warned by their former fate, might poſſibly exerciſe their powers with ſome degree of juſtice. But the madneſs would be as unqueſtionable, as the competence, of that Parliament, which ſhould make ſuch attempts. If any thing can be ſuppoſed out of the power of human legiſlature, it is Religion; I admit however that the eſtabliſhed religion of this country has been three or four times altered by act of parliament; and therefore that a ſtatute binds even in that caſe. But we may very ſafely affirm, that notwithſtanding this apparent omnipotence, it would be now found as impoſſible for King and Parliament to change the eſtabliſhed religion of this country, as it was to King *James* alone, when he attempted to make ſuch an alteration without a Parliament. In effect, to follow, not to force the publick inclination; to give a direction, a form, a technical dreſs and a ſpecifick

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a ſpecifick ſanction, to the general ſenſe of the community, is the true end of legiſlature. When it goes beyond this, its authority will be precarious, let its rights be what they will.

It is ſo with regard to the exerciſe of all the powers, which our conſtitution knows in any of its parts, and indeed to the ſubſtantial exiſtence of any of the parts themſelves. The King's negative to bills is one of the moſt indiſputed of the royal prerogatives; and it extends to all caſes whatſoever. I am far from certain, that if ſeveral laws, which I know, had fallen under the ſtroke of that ſceptre, that the publick would have had a very heavy loſs. But it is not the *propriety* of the exerciſe which is in queſtion. The exerciſe itſelf is wiſely foreborne. Its repoſe may be the preſervation of its exiſtence; and its exiſtence may be the means of ſaving the conſtitution itſelf, on an occaſion worthy of bringing it forth.

As the diſputants, whoſe accurate and logical reaſonings have brought us into our preſent condition, think it abſurd that powers, or members of any conſtitution ſhould exiſt, rarely if ever to be exerciſed, I hope, I ſhall be excuſed in mentioning another inſtance, that is material. We know, that the Convocation of the Clergy had formerly been called,

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and ſat with nearly as much regularity to buſi-neſs as Parliament itſelf. It is now called for form only. It ſits for the purpoſe of making ſome polite eccleſiaſtical compliments to the King; and when that grace is ſaid, retires and is heard of no more. It is however *a part of the Conſtitution*, and may be called out into act and energy, whenever there is occaſion; and whenever thoſe, who conjure up that ſpirit, will chooſe to abide the conſequences. It is wiſe to permit its legal exiſtence; it is much wiſer to continue it a legal exiſtence only. So truly has Prudence, (conſtituted as the God of this lower world) the entire dominion over every exerciſe of power, committed into its hands; and yet I have lived to ſee prudence and conformity to circumſtances, wholly ſet at naught in our late controverſies, and treated as if they were the moſt contemptible and irrational of all things. I have heard it an hundred times very gravely alledged, that in order to keep power in wind, it was neceſſary, by preference, to exert it in thoſe very points in which it was moſt likely to be reſiſted, and the leaſt likely to be productive of any advantage.

Theſe were the conſiderations, Gentlemen, which led me early to think, that in the com-prehenſive dominion which the divine Provi-dence had put into our hands, inſtead of trou-bling our underſtandings with ſpeculations

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concerning the unity of empire, and the identity or diſtinction of legiſlative powers, and inflaming our paſſions with the heat and pride of controverſy, it was our duty, in all ſoberneſs, to conform our Government to the character and circumſtances of the ſeveral people who compoſe this mighty and ſtrangely diverſified maſs. I never was wild enough to conceive, that one method would ſerve for the whole; I could never conceive that the natives of *Hindoſtan* and thoſe of *Virginia* could be ordered in the ſame manner; or that the *Cutchery* Court and the grand Jury of *Salem* could be regulated on a ſimilar plan. I was perſuaded, that Government was a practical thing, made for the happineſs of mankind, and not to furniſh out a ſpectacle of uniformity, to gratify the ſchemes of viſionary politicians. Our buſineſs was to rule, not to wrangle; and it would have been a poor compenſation that we had triumphed in a diſpute, whilſt we loſt an empire.

If there be one fact in the world perfectly clear, it is this; "That the diſpoſition of the "people of America is wholly averſe to any "other than a free Government;" and this known character of the people is indication enough to any honeſt ſtateſman, how he ought to adapt whatever power he finds in his hands to their caſe. If any aſk me what a free Government is? I anſwer, that, for any

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practical purpoſe, it is what the people think ſo; and that they, and not I, are the natural, lawful, and competent judges of this matter. If they practically allow me a greater degree of authority over them than is conſiſtent with any correct ideas of perfect freedom, I ought to thank them for ſo great a truſt, and not to endeavour to prove from thence, that they have reaſoned amiſs, and that having gone ſo far, by analogy, they muſt hereafter have no enjoyment but by my pleaſure.

If we had ſeen this done by any others, we muſt have concluded them far gone in madneſs. It is melancholy as well as ridiculous, to obſerve the kind of reaſoning with which the publick has been amuſed, in order to divert our minds from the common ſenſe of our American policy. There are people, who have ſplit and anatomiſed the doctrine of free Government, as if it were an abſtract queſtion concerning metaphyſical liberty and neceſſity; and not a matter of moral prudence and natural feeling. They have diſputed, whether liberty be a poſitive or a negative idea; whether it does not conſiſt in being governed by laws; without conſidering what are the laws or who are the makers; they have queſtioned whether man has any rights by nature; and whether all the property he enjoys, be not the alms of his government, and his life itſelf their favour and indulgence. Others cor-

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rupting religion, as theſe have perverted philoſophy, contend, that Chriſtians are redeemed into captivity; and the blood of the Saviour of mankind has been ſhed to make them the ſlaves of a few proud and inſolent ſinners. Theſe ſhocking extremes, provoking to extremes of another kind, ſpeculations are let looſe as deſtructive to all authority, as the former are to all freedom. In this manner the ſtirrers up of this contention, not ſatisfied with diſtracting our dependencies and filling them with blood and ſlaughter, are corrupting our underſtandings: they are endeavouring to tear up, along with practical liberty, all the foundations of human ſociety, all equity and juſtice, religion and order.

Civil freedom, gentlemen, is not, as many have endeavoured to perſuade you, a thing that lies hid in the depths of abſtruſe ſcience. It is a bleſſing and a benefit, not an abſtract ſpeculation; and all the juſt reaſoning that can be upon it, is of ſo coarſe a texture, as perfectly to ſuit the ordinary capacities of thoſe who are to enjoy, and of thoſe who are to defend it. Far from any reſemblance to thoſe propoſitions in Geometry and Metaphyſics, which admit no medium, but muſt be true or falſe in all their latitude, ſocial and civil freedom, like all other things in common life, are variouſly mixed and modified, enjoyed in very different degrees, and ſhaped into

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into an infinite diverſity of forms, according to the temper and circumſtances of every community. The *extreme* of liberty (which is its abſtract perfection, but its real fault) obtains no where, nor ought to obtain any where. Becauſe extremes, as we all know, in every point which relates either to our duties or ſatisfactions in life, are deſtructive both to virtue and enjoyment. Liberty too muſt be limited in order to be poſſeſſed. The degree of reſtraint it is impoſſible in any caſe to ſettle preciſely. But it ought to be the conſtant aim of every wiſe publick counſel, to find out by cautious experiments, and rational, cool endeavours, with how little, not how much of this reſtraint, the community can ſubſiſt. For liberty is a good to be improved, and not an evil to be leſſened. It is not only a private bleſſing of the firſt order, but the vital ſpring and energy of the ſtate itſelf, which has juſt ſo much life and vigour as there is liberty in it. But whether liberty be advantageous or not, (for I know it is a faſhion to decry the very principle) none will diſpute that peace is a bleſſing; and peace muſt in the courſe of human affairs be frequently bought by ſome indulgence and toleration at leaſt to liberty. For as the Sabbath (though of divine inſtitution) was made for man, not man for the Sabbath, government, which can claim no higher origin or authority, in its exerciſe at leaſt, ought to conform to the exigencies of the time

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and the temper and character of the people, with whom it is concerned; and not always to attempt violently to bend the people to their theories of ſubjection. The bulk of mankind on their part are not exceſſively curious concerning any theories, whilſt they are really happy; and one ſure ſymptom of an ill conducted ſtate, is the propenſity of the people to reſort to them.

But when ſubjects, by a long courſe of ſuch ill conduct, are once thoroughly inflamed, and the ſtate itſelf violently diſtempered, the people muſt have ſome ſatisfaction to their feelings, more ſolid than a ſophiſtical ſpeculation on law and government. Such was our ſituation; and ſuch a ſatisfaction was neceſſary to prevent recourſe to arms; it was neceſſary towards laying them down; it will be neceſſary to prevent the taking them up again and again. Of what nature this ſatisfaction ought to be, I wiſh it had been the diſpoſition of Parliament ſeriouſly to conſider. It was certainly a deliberation that called for the exertion of all their wiſdom.

I am, and ever have been deeply ſenſible, of the difficulty of reconciling the ſtrong preſiding power, that is ſo uſeful towards the conſervation of a vaſt, diſconnected, infinitely diverſified empire, with that liberty and ſafety of the provinces, which they muſt enjoy, (in opinion

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opinion and practice at leaſt) or they will not be provinces at all. I know, and have long felt, the difficulty of reconciling the unwieldy haughtineſs of a great ruling nation, habituated to command, pampered by enormous wealth, and confident from a long courſe of proſperity and victory, to the high ſpirit of free dependencies, animated with the firſt glow and activity of juvenile heat, and aſſuming to themſelves as their birth-right, ſome part of that very pride which oppreſſes them. They who perceive no difficulty in reconciling theſe tempers, (which however to make peace muſt ſome way or other be reconciled), are much above my capacity, or much below the magnitude of the buſineſs. Of one thing I am perfectly clear, that it is not by deciding the ſuit, but by compromiſing the difference, that peace can be reſtored or kept. They who would put an end to ſuch quarrels, by declaring roundly in favour of the whole demands of either party, have miſtaken in my humble opinion, the office of a mediator.

The war is now of full two years ſtanding; the controverſy of many more. In different periods of the diſpute, different methods of reconciliation were to be purſued. I mean to trouble you with a ſhort ſtate of things at the moſt important of theſe periods, in order to give you a more diſtinct idea of our policy with regard to this moſt delicate of all objects.

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The Colonies were from the beginning ſubject to the legiſlature of Great Britain, on principles which they never examined; and we permitted to them many local privileges, without aſking how they agreed with that legiſlative authority. Modes of adminiſtration were formed in an inſenſible, and very unſyſtematick manner. But they gradually adapted themſelves to the varying condition of things.—What was firſt a ſingle kingdom ſtretched into an empire; and an imperial ſuperintendency of ſome kind or other became neceſſary. Parliament, from a mere repreſentative of the people, and a guardian of popular privileges for its own immediate conſtituents, grew into a mighty ſovereign. Inſtead of being a control on the Crown on its own behalf, it communicated a ſort of ſtrength to the Royal authority; which was wanted for the conſervation of a new object, but which could not be ſafely truſted to the Crown alone. On the other hand, the Colonies advancing by equal ſteps, and governed by the ſame neceſſity, had formed within themſelves, either by royal inſtruction, or royal charter, aſſemblies ſo exceedingly reſembling a parliament, in all their forms, functions, and powers, that it was impoſſible they ſhould not imbibe ſome opinion of a ſimilar authority.

At the firſt deſignation of theſe aſſemblies, they were probably not intended for any thing more,

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more, (nor perhaps did they think themſelves much higher) than the municipal corporations within this Iſland, to which ſome at preſent love to compare them. But nothing in progreſſion can reſt on its original plan. We may as well think of rocking a grown man in the cradle of an infant. Therefore, as the Colonies proſpered and encreaſed to a numerous and mighty people, ſpreading over a very great tract of the globe; it was natural that they ſhould attribute to aſſemblies, ſo reſpectable in their formal conſtitution, ſome part of the dignity of the great nations which they repreſented. No longer tied to bye-laws, theſe aſſemblies made acts of all ſorts and in all caſes whatſoever. They levied money, not for parochial purpoſes, but upon regular grants to the Crown, following all the rules and principles of a Parliament, to which they approached every day more and more nearly. Thoſe who think themſelves wiſer than Providence and ſtronger than the courſe of nature, may complain of all this variation, on the one ſide or the other, as their ſeveral humours and prejudices may lead them. But things could not be otherwiſe; and Engliſh Colonies muſt be had on theſe terms, or not had at all. In the mean time neither party felt any inconvenience from this double legiſlature, to which they had been formed by imperceptible habits, and old cuſtom, the great ſupport of all the governments in the world. Though theſe two legiſ-

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latures were ſometimes found perhaps performing the very ſame functions, they did not very groſsly or ſyſtematically claſh. In all likelyhood this aroſe from mere neglect; poſſibly from the natural operation of things, which, left to themſelves, generally fall into their proper order. But whatever was the cauſe, it is certain, that a regular revenue by the authority of Parliament for the ſupport of civil and military eſtabliſhments, ſeems not to have been thought of until the Colonies were too proud to ſubmit, too ſtrong to be forced, too enlightened not to ſee all the conſequences which muſt ariſe from ſuch a ſyſtem.

If ever this ſcheme of taxation was to be puſhed againſt the inclinations of the people, it was evident, that diſcuſſions muſt ariſe, which would let looſe all the elements that compoſed this double conſtitution; would ſhew how much each of their members had departed from its original principles; and would diſcover contradictions in each legiſlature, as well to its own firſt principles, as to its relation to the other, very difficult if not abſolutely impoſſible to be reconciled.

Therefore at the firſt fatal opening of this conteſt, the wiſeſt courſe ſeemed to be to put an end as ſoon as poſſible to the immediate cauſes of the diſpute; and to quiet a diſcuſſion, not eaſily ſettled upon clear principles, and ariſing

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ariſing from claims, which pride would permit neither party to abandon, by reſorting as nearly as poſſible, to the old ſucceſsful courſe. A mere repeal of the obnoxious tax, with a declaration of the legiſlative authority of this kingdom, was then fully ſufficient to procure peace to *both ſides*. Man is a creature of habit; and the firſt breach being of very ſhort continuance, the Colonies fell back exactly into their antient ſtate. The Congreſs has uſed an expreſſion with regard to this pacification which appears to me truly ſignificant. After the repeal of the Stamp Act, "the Colonies fell," ſays this aſſembly, "into their antient ſtate of "*unſuſpecting confidence in the Mother Country*." This unſuſpecting confidence is the true center of gravity amongſt mankind, about which all the parts are at reſt. It is this *unſuſpecting confidence* that removes all difficulties, and reconciles all the contradictions which occur in the complexity of all antient puzzled political eſtabliſhments. Happy are the rulers which have the ſecret of preſerving it!

The whole empire has reaſon to remember with eternal gratitude, the wiſdom and temper of that man and his excellent aſſociates, who, to recover this confidence, formed the plan of pacification in 1766. That plan, being built upon the nature of man, and the circumſtances and habits of the two countries, and not on any viſionary ſpeculations, perfectly anſwered its

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its end, as long as it was thought proper to adhere to it. Without giving a rude ſhock to the dignity (well or ill underſtood) of this Parliament, it gave perfect content to our dependencies. Had it not been for the mediatorial ſpirit and talents of that great man, between ſuch claſhing pretenſions and paſſions, we ſhould then have ruſhed headlong (I know what I ſay) into the calamities of that civil war, in which, by departing from his ſyſtem, we are at length involved; and we ſhould have been precipitated into that war, at a time, when circumſtances both at home and abroad were far, very far, more unfavourable unto us than they were at the breaking out of the preſent troubles.

I had the happineſs of giving my firſt votes in Parliament for that pacification. I was one of thoſe almoſt unanimous members, who, in the neceſſary conceſſions of Parliament, would as much as poſſible have preſerved its authority, and reſpected its honour. I could not at once tear from my heart prejudices which were dear to me, and which bore a reſemblance to virtues. I had then, and I have ſtill, my partialities. What Parliament gave up I wiſhed to be given, as of grace, and favour, and affection, and not as a reſtitution of ſtolen goods. High dignity relented as it was ſoothed; and an act of benignity from old acknowledged greatneſs had its full effect on our dependencies. Our unlimited declaration of legiſlative authority

authority produced not a ſingle murmur. If this undefined power has become odious ſince that time, and full of horror to the Colonies, it is becauſe the *unſuſpicious confidence* is loſt; and the parental affection, in the boſom of whoſe boundleſs authority they repoſed their privileges, is become eſtranged and hoſtile.

It will be aſked, if ſuch was then my opinion of the mode of pacification, how I came to be the very perſon who moved, not only for a repeal of all the late coercive ſtatutes, but for mutilating, by a poſitive law, the entireneſs of the legiſlative power of Parliament, and cutting off from it the whole right of taxation? I anſwer, becauſe a different ſtate of things requires a different conduct. When the diſpute had gone to the laſt extremities (which no man laboured more to prevent than I did) the conceſſions which had ſatisfied in the beginning, could ſatisfy no longer; the violation of tacit faith required explicit ſecurity. The ſame cauſe, which has introduced all formal compacts and covenants among men made it neceſſary: I mean, habits of foreneſs, jealouſy, and diſtruſt. I parted with it, as with a limb: but as with a limb to ſave the body; and I would have parted with more, if more had been neceſſary. Any thing rather than a fruitleſs, hopeleſs, unnatural civil war. This mode of yielding would, it is ſaid, give way to independency, without a war. I am perſuaded

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ſuaded from the nature of things, and from every information, that it would have had a directly contrary effect. But if it had this effect, I confeſs, that I ſhould prefer independency without war, to independency with it; and I have ſo much truſt in the inclinations and prejudices of mankind, and ſo little in any thing elſe, that I ſhould expect ten times more benefit to this Kingdom from the affection of America, though under a ſeparate eſtabliſhment, than from her perfect ſubmiſſion to the Crown and Parliament, accompanied with her terror, diſguſt, and abhorrence. Bodies tied together by ſo unnatural a bond of union, as mutual hatred, are only connected to their ruin.

One hundred and ten reſpectable Members of Parliament voted for that conceſſion. Many not preſent, when the motion was made, were of the ſentiments of thoſe who voted. I knew it would then have made peace. I am not without hopes that it would do ſo at preſent, if it were adopted. No benefit, no revenue, could be loſt by it. For be fully aſſured, that, of all the phantoms that ever deluded the fond hopes of a credulous world, a parliamentary revenue in the Colonies is the moſt perfectly chimerical. Your breaking them to any ſubjection, far from relieving your burthens, (the pretext for this war,) will never pay that military force which will be kept up to the deſtruction of

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of their liberties and yours. I riſque nothing in this prophecy.

Gentlemen, you have my opinion on the preſent ſtate of public affairs. Mean as theſe opinions may be in themſelves, your partiality has made them of ſome importance. Without troubling myſelf to enquire whether I am under a formal obligation to it, I have a pleaſure in accounting for my conduct to my Conſtituents. I feel warmly on this ſubject, and I expreſs myſelf as I feel. If I preſume to blame any public proceeding, I cannot be ſuppoſed to be perſonal. Would to God I could be ſuſpected of it. My fault might be greater, but the public calamity would be leſs extenſive. If my conduct has not been able to make any impreſſion on the warm part of that antient and powerful party, with whoſe ſupport, I was not honoured at my Election; on my ſide, my reſpect, regard, and duty to them is not at all leſſened. I owe the Gentlemen who compoſe it my moſt humble ſervice in every thing. I hope that whenever any of them were pleaſed to command me, that they found me perfectly equal in my obedience. But flattery and friendſhip are very different things; and to miſlead is not to ſerve them. I cannot purchaſe the favour of any man by concealing from him what I think his ruin.

By

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By the favour of my fellow-citizens, I am the repreſentative of an honeſt, well-ordered, virtuous City; of a people, who preſerve more of the original Engliſh ſimplicity, and purity of manners, than perhaps any other. You poſſeſs among you ſeveral men and magiſtrates of large and cultivated underſtandings, fit for any employment in any ſphere. I do, to the beſt of my power, act ſo as to make myſelf worthy of ſo honourable a choice. If I were ready, on any call of my own vanity or intereſt, or to anſwer any election purpoſe, to forſake principles, (whatever they are) which I had formed at a mature age, on full reflexion, and which have been confirmed by long experience, I ſhould forfeit the only thing which makes you pardon ſo many errors and imperfections in me.

Not that I think it fit for any one to rely too much on his own underſtanding; or to be filled with a preſumption, not becoming a Chriſtian man, in his own perſonal ſtability and rectitude. I hope I am far from that vain confidence, which almoſt always fails in trial. I know my weakneſs in all reſpects, as much at leaſt as any enemy I have; and I attempt to take ſecurity againſt it. The only method which has ever been found effectual to preſerve any man againſt the corruption of nature and example, is an habit of life and communication of councils with the moſt virtuous and public

public ſpirited men of the age you live in. Such a ſociety cannot be kept without advantage, or deſerted without ſhame. For this rule of conduct I may be called in reproach a *party man*; but I am little affected with ſuch aſperſions. In the way which they call party, I worſhip the conſtitution of your fathers; and I ſhall never bluſh for my political company. All reverence to honour, all idea of what it is, will be loſt out of the world, before it can be imputed as a fault to any man, that he has been cloſely connected with thoſe incomparable perſons, living and dead, with whom for eleven years I have conſtantly thought and acted. If I have wandered out of the paths of rectitude, into thoſe of intereſted faction, it was in company with the Saviles, the Dowdeſwells, the Wentworths, the Bentincks; with the Lenoxes, the Manchеſters, the Keppels, the Saunders's; with the temperate, permanent, hereditary virtue of the whole houſe of Cavendiſh; names, among which, ſome have extended your fame and empire in arms, and all have fought the battle of your liberties in fields not leſs glorious.—Theſe, and many more like theſe, grafting public principles on private honour, have redeemed the preſent age, and would have adorned the moſt ſplendid period in your hiſtory. Where could a man, conſcious of his inability to act alone, and willing to act as he ought to do, have arranged himſelf better? If any one thinks this kind of ſociety to be taken up as

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the beſt method of gratifying low perſonal pride, or ambitious intereſt, he is miſtaken; and knows nothing of the world.

Preferring this connexion; I do not mean to detract in the ſlighteſt degree from others. There are ſome of thoſe, whom I admire at ſomething of a greater diſtance, with whom I have had the happineſs alſo perfectly to agree, in almoſt all the particulars, in which I have differed with ſome ſucceſſive adminiſtrations; and they are ſuch, as it never can be reputable to any government to reckon among its enemies.

I hope there are none of you, corrupted with the doctrine taught by wicked men for the worſt purpoſes, and greedily received by the malignant credulity of envy and ignorance, which is, that the men who act upon the public ſtage are all alike; all equally corrupt; all influenced by no other views than the ſordid lucre of ſalary and penſion. The thing, I know by experience to be falſe. Never expecting to find perfection in men, and not looking for divine attributes in created beings, in my commerce with my cotemporaries, I have found much human virtue. I have ſeen not a little public ſpirit; a real ſubordination of intereſt to duty; and a decent and regulated ſenſibility to honeſt fame and reputation. The age unqueſtionably

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tionably produces, (whether in a greater or leſs number than in former times, I know not) daring profligates, and inſidious hypocrites. What then? Am I not to avail myſelf of whatever good is to be found in the world, becauſe of the mixture of evil that will always be in it? The ſmallneſs of the quantity in currency only heightens the value. They, who raiſe ſuſpicions on the good on account of the behaviour of ill men, are of the party of the latter. The common cant is no juſtification for taking this party. I have been deceived, ſay they, by *Titius* and *Mœvius*. I have been the dupe of this pretender or of that mountebank; and I can truſt appearances no longer. But my credulity and want of diſcernment cannot, as I conceive, amount to a fair preſumption againſt any man's integrity. A conſcientious perſon would rather doubt his own judgment, than condemn his ſpecies. He would ſay, I have obſerved without attention, or judged upon erroneous maxims; I truſted to profeſſion, when I ought to have attended to conduct. Such a man will grow wiſe, not malignant, by his acquaintance with the world. But he that accuſes all mankind of corruption ought to remember that he is ſure to convict only one. In truth I ſhould much rather admit thoſe, whom at any time I have diſreliſhed the moſt, to be patterns of perfection, than ſeek a conſolation to my own unworthineſs, in a general communion of depravity with all about me.

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That this ill-natured doctrine ſhould be preached by the miſſionaries of a court, I do not wonder. It anſwers their purpoſe. But that it ſhould be heard among thoſe who pretend to be ſtrong aſſertors of liberty, is not only ſurpriſing, but hardly natural. This moral levelling is a *ſervile principle*. It leads to practical paſſive obedience far better, than all the doctrines, which the pliant accommodation of Theology to power, has ever produced. It cuts up by the roots, not only all idea of forcible reſiſtance, but even of civil oppoſition. It diſpoſes men to an abject ſubmiſſion, not by opinion, which may be ſhaken by argument or altered by paſſion, but by the ſtrong ties of public and private intereſt. For if all men who act in a public ſituation are equally ſelfiſh, corrupt, and venal, what reaſon can be given for deſiring any ſort of change, which, beſides the evils which muſt attend all changes, can be productive of no poſſible advantage? The active men in the ſtate are true ſamples of the maſs. If they are univerſally depraved, the common-wealth itſelf is not ſound. We may amuſe ourſelves with talking as much as we pleaſe of the virtue of middle or humble life; that is, we may place our confidence in the virtue of thoſe who have never been tried. But if the perſons who are continually emerging out of that ſphere, be no better than thoſe whom birth

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birth has placed above it, what hopes are there in the remainder of the body which is to furniſh the perpetual ſucceſſion of the ſtate? All who have ever written on government, are unanimous, that among a people generally corrupt, liberty cannot long exiſt. And indeed how is it poſſible? when thoſe who are to make the laws, to guard, to enforce, or to obey them, are, by a tacit confederacy of manners, indiſpoſed to the ſpirit of all generous and noble inſtitutions.

I am aware that the age is not what we all wiſh. But I am ſure, that the only means of checking its precipitate degeneracy, is heartily to concur with whatever is the beſt in our time; and to have ſome more correct ſtandard of judging what that beſt is, than the tranſient and uncertain favour of a court. If once we are able to find, and can prevail on ourſelves to ſtrengthen an union of ſuch men, whatever accidentally becomes indiſpoſed to ill-exerciſed power, even by the ordinary operation of human paſſions, muſt join with that ſociety, and cannot long be joined, without in ſome degree aſſimilating to it. Virtue will catch as well as vice by contact; and the public ſtock of honeſt manly principle will daily accumulate. We are not too nicely to ſcrutinize motives as long as action is irreproachable. It is enough, (and for a worthy man perhaps too much) to deal

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deal out its infamy to convicted guilt and declared apoſtacy.

To act on the principles of the conſtitution, with the beſt men the time affords, has been from the beginning the rule of my conduct; and I mean to continue it, as long as ſuch a body as I have deſcribed, can by any poſſibility be kept together. For I ſhould think it the moſt dreadful of all offences, not only towards the preſent generation but to all the future, if I were to do any thing which could make the minuteſt breach in this great conſervatory of free principles. Thoſe who perhaps have the ſame intentions, but are ſeparated by ſome little political animoſities, will, I hope, diſcern at laſt, how little conducive it is to any rational purpoſe, to lower its reputation. For my part, Gentlemen, from much experience, from no little thinking, and from comparing a great variety of things, I am thoroughly perſuaded, that the laſt hopes of preſerving the ſpirit of the Engliſh Conſtitution, or of re-uniting the diſſipated members of the Engliſh race upon a common plan of tranquillity and liberty, does entirely depend on the firm and laſting union of ſuch men; and above all on their keeping themſelves from that deſpair, which is ſo very apt to fall on thoſe, whom a violence of character, and a mixture of ambitious views, do not ſupport through a long, painful, and unſucceſsful ſtruggle.

There

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There never, Gentlemen, was a period in which the ſtedfaſtneſs of ſome men has been put to ſo ſore a trial. It is not very difficult for well-formed minds to abandon their intereſt; but the ſeparation of fame and virtue is an harſh divorce. Liberty is in danger of being made unpopular to Engliſhmen. Contending for an imaginary power, we begin to acquire the ſpirit of domination, and to loſe the reliſh of honeſt equality. The principles of our forefathers become ſuſpected to us, becauſe we ſee them animating the preſent oppoſition of our children. The faults which grow out of the luxuriance of freedom, appear much more ſhocking to us, than the baſe vices which are generated from the rankneſs of ſervitude. Accordingly the leaſt reſiſtance to power appears more inexcuſeable in our eyes than the greateſt abuſes of authority. All dread of a ſtanding military force is looked upon as a ſuperſtitious panick. All ſhame of calling in foreigners and ſavages in a civil conteſt is worn off. We grow indifferent to the conſequences inevitable to ourſelves from the plan of ruling half the empire by a mercenary ſword. We are taught to believe, that a deſire of domineering over our countrymen, is love to our country; that thoſe who hate civil war abet rebellion; and that the amiable and conciliatory virtues of lenity, moderation, and tenderneſs to the privileges of thoſe who depend

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on this kingdom, are a ſort of treaſon to the ſtate.

It is impoſſible that we ſhould remain long in a ſituation, which breeds ſuch notions and diſpoſitions, without ſome great alreration in the national character. Thoſe ingenuous and feeling minds, who are ſo fortified againſt all other things, and ſo unarmed to whatever approaches in the ſhape of diſgrace, finding the principles, which they conſidered as ſure means of honour, to be grown into diſrepute, will retire diſheartened and diſguſted. Thoſe of a more robuſt make, the bold, able, ambitious men, who pay ſome part of their court to power through the people, and ſubſtitute the voice of tranſient opinion in the place of true glory, will give into the general mode. The ſuperior underſtandings, which ought to correct vulgar prejudice, will confirm and aggravate its errors. Many things have been long operating towards a gradual change in our principles. But this American war has done more in a very few years than all the other cauſes could have effected in a century. It is therefore not on its own ſeparate account, but becauſe of its attendant circumſtances, that I conſider its continuance, or its ending in any way but that of an honourable and liberal accommodation, as the greateſt evils which can befal us. For that reaſon I have troubled you with this long letter. For that reaſon I intreat you again and again, nei-

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ther to be perſwaded, ſhamed, or frighted out of the principles that have hitherto led ſo many of you to abhor the war, its cauſe, and its conſequences. Let us not be amongſt the firſt who renounce the maxims of our fore-fathers.

I have the honour to be,

GENTLEMEN,

Your moſt obedient,

and faithful humble Servant,

BEACONSFIELD,
April 3, 1777.

EDMUND BURKE.

P. S. You may communicate this Letter in any manner you think proper to my Conſtituents.

FINIS.

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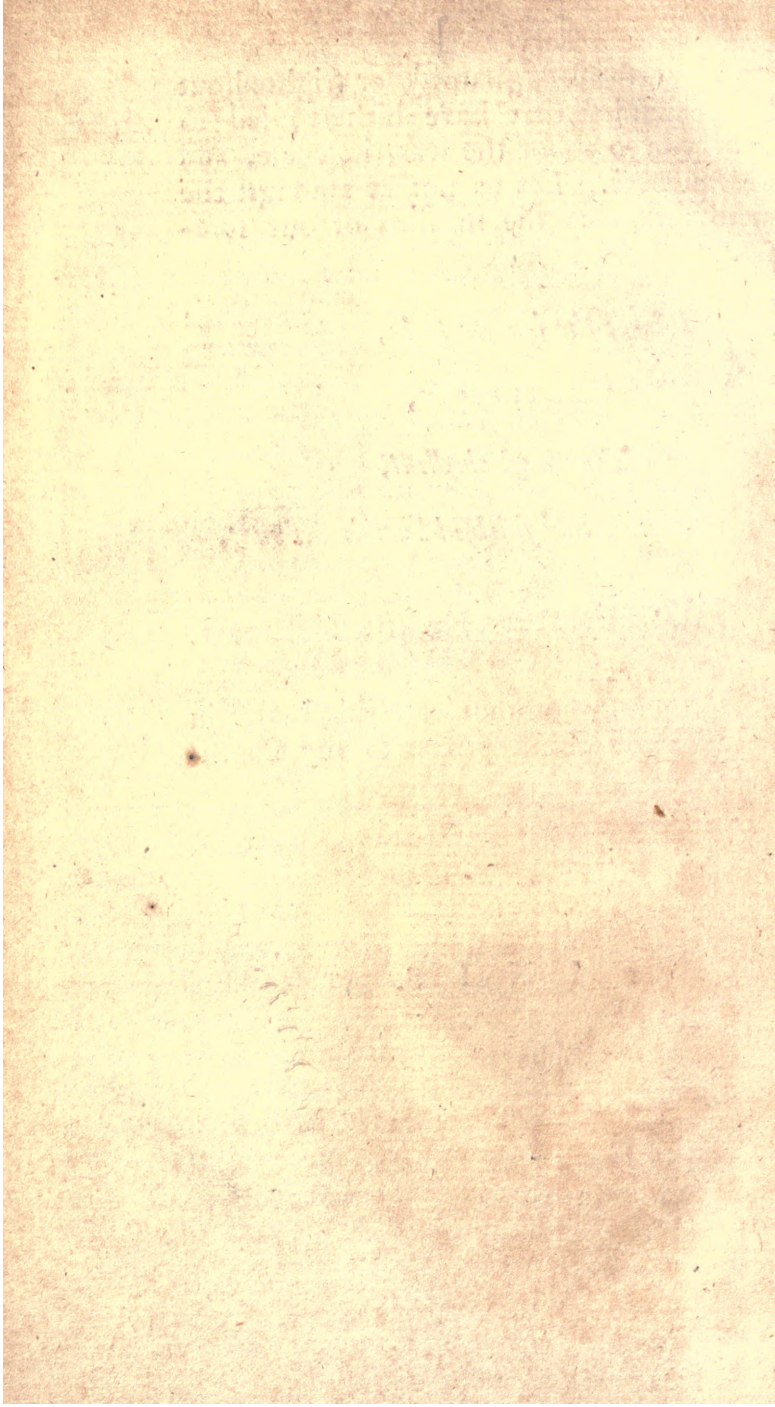

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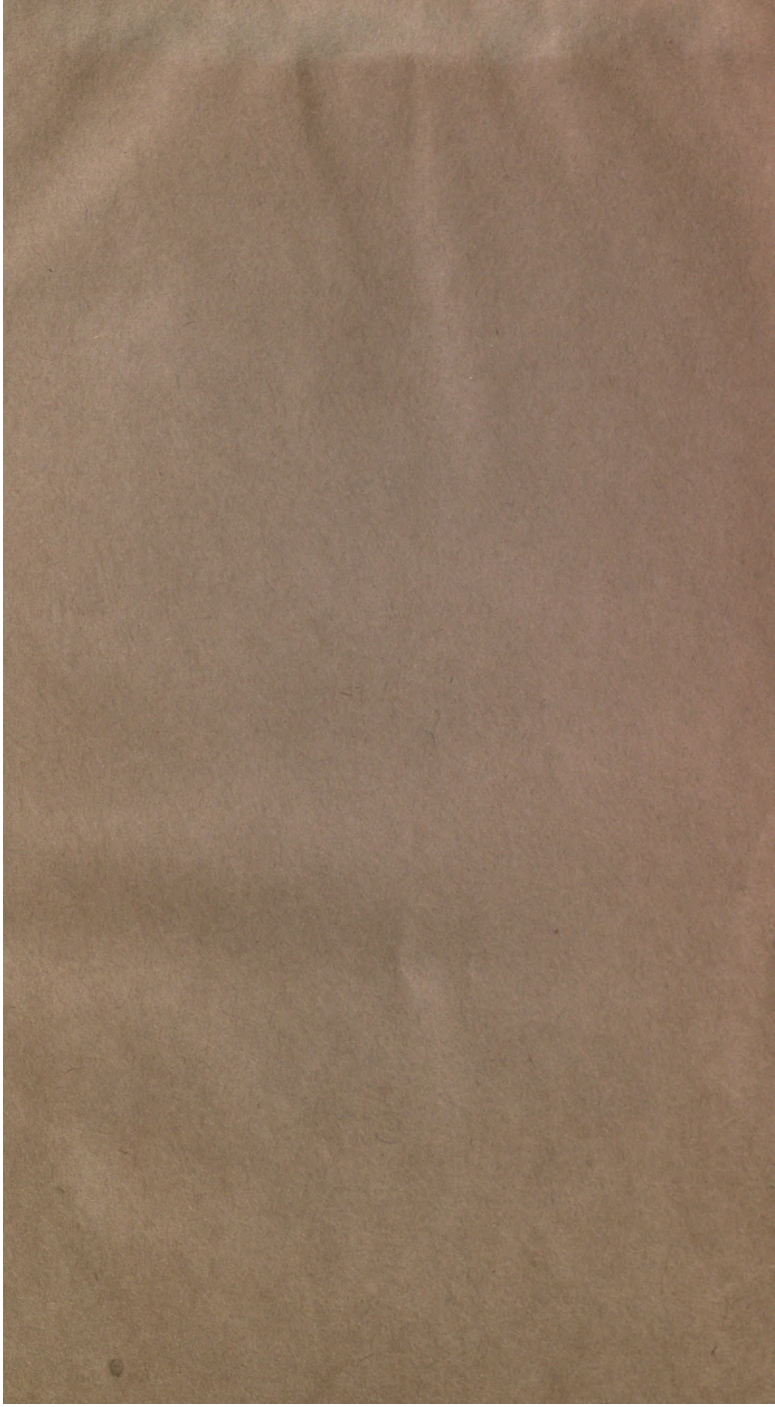

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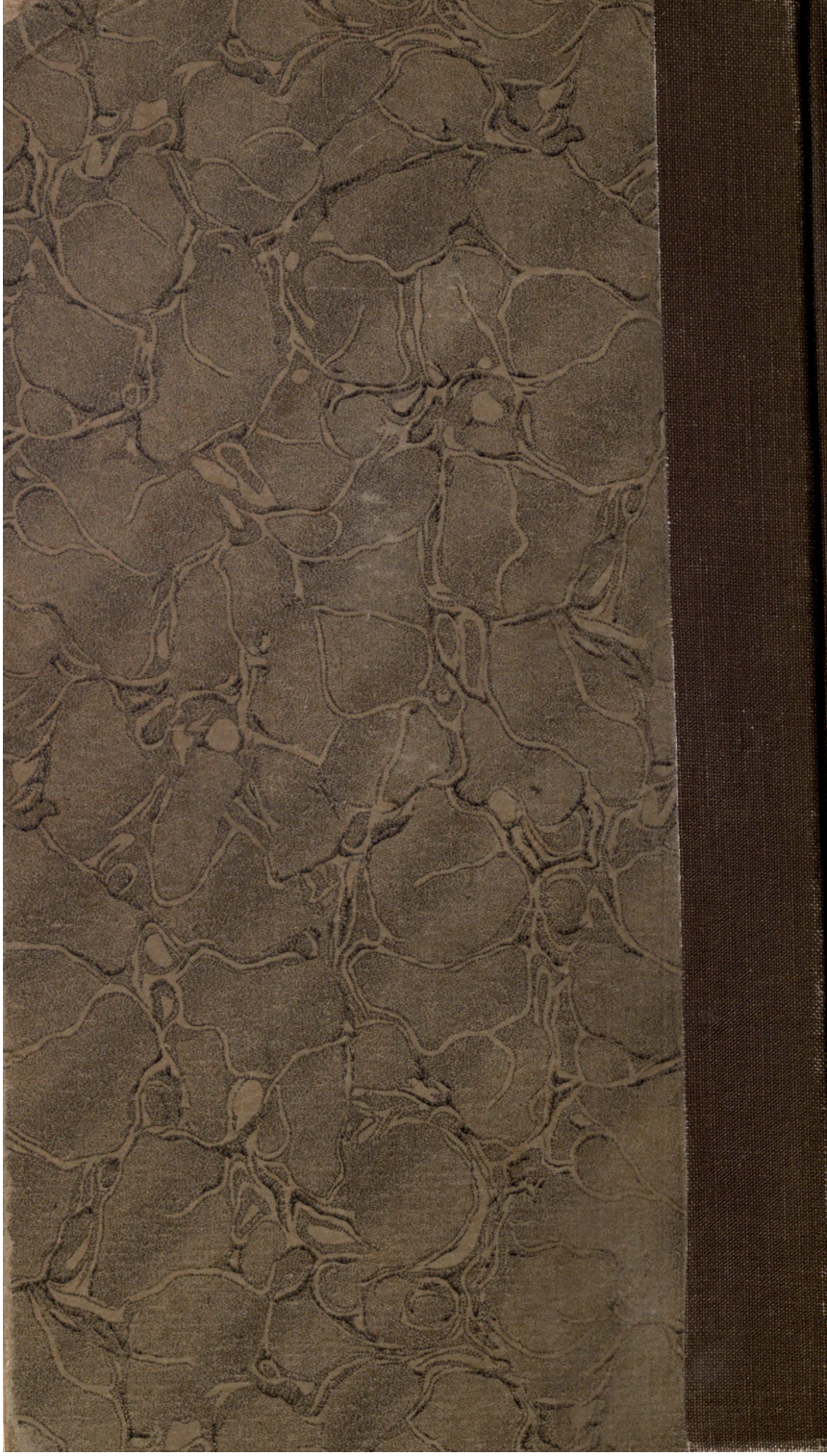

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